

Gia comantonio, Archimedes

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Sculptures - G

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# Statues of Abraham Lincoln

Archimedes  
Giacomantonio

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

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Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

# Sculpture Review

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"The particular objects for which the Society is to be formed are to spread the knowledge of good sculpture; foster the taste for, and encourage the production of, ideal sculpture for the household and museums; promote the decoration of public and other buildings, squares and parks with sculpture of a high class, improve the quality of the sculptor's art as applied to industries and provide from time to time for exhibitions of sculpture." —Constitution of the National Sculpture Society, May 30, 1893

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# HIGHLIGHTS

## COVER STORY

"Liberty Enlightening the World" (detail), commonly called "The Statue of Liberty", is the creation of French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, but others have contributed, too. (See page 9.)

The statue arrived in sections in the New York Harbor on June 15, 1885. Four days later, it reached its final resting place on Bedloe's Island (now Liberty Island).

Currently the 99-year-old "Liberty" is undergoing extensive renovations and is closed to visitors until the centennial unveiling on July 4, 1986.

The cover photo by Michael George is from his book "The Statue of Liberty," published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., NYC.

## NINE WIN AWARDS

The National Sculpture Society presented nine medals and two citations on May 14 to men who had done much to "spread the knowledge of good sculpture," one of the principal aims of the Society. The recipients were honored for their work as sculptors, architects, curators, patrons or craftsmen.

Held at the National Arts Club, New York City, the ceremony followed a dinner attended by a capacity audience.

The society's highest award, the Medal of Honor, awarded for notable achievement or for encouragement to American sculpture, was presented to Marshall Fredericks. This was only the 29th presentation in the past 56 years. It was awarded in recognition of Mr. Fredericks' more than 70 major commissions in this country and Europe.

The Herbert Adams Memorial Medal for service to American sculpture was awarded to two men who

exemplify the cooperation between scholars and patrons to spread knowledge of good sculpture in the public mind. It was given to Lewis Inman Sharp, curator of American sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for the four exhibitions he has staged there that re-examine and re-evaluate late 19th century and early 20th century American sculpture. Cognizance was also taken of the scholarly catalogs he prepared for those exhibitions. The medal was also awarded to Clevepak Corporation for the funding of these exhibitions and was received by Charles Moore, its chief executive.

The Henry Hering Memorial Medal for collaboration among sculptor, architect and owner in the distinguished use of sculpture was awarded for the James Madison Memorial Library, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The owner of the new building, the United States Government, was represented by the Architect of the Capitol,

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NSS president Fritz Cleary presents Gold Medal of Honor to Marshall Fredericks.



## *Young Sculptor Series*

### GEMITO—CRAZY LIKE A GENIUS

**M**usic and Enrico Caruso were the initial cause of my arriving at the age of 20 in Rome . . . to study sculpture. While it may seem a contradiction to report that it was music and the great tenor who were the cause of my going to Italy to become a sculptor they were but one of many strange twists of fate that determined my finding my life long career.

How did it come about? It was simple; I was born lucky.

I was lucky in my parents, lucky for the opportunities I had been given in Jersey City where I had been born in 1906, lucky that I had an uncle who was a newsman in Rome at the time of my arrival.

My father, Gaetano Giacomantonio was a musician, composer, conductor and newspaper music critic. It was his role as a critic that brought him to

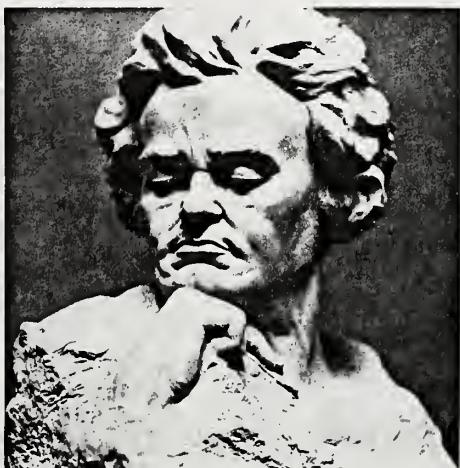
America with Puccini for the premier of the latter's "Girl of the Golden West" at the New York Metropolitan Opera House. My father elected to stay in this country, and he opened a school of music in Jersey City which he operated for many years. So it came about that my two sisters, three brothers and I were born there. From early years we were all trained to be musicians. The idea of being a sculptor never entered my head.

Through my father's influence I joined the Metropolitan Opera chorus when I was 10 and sang with them for the next four years. One time backstage Enrico Caruso stopped to compliment me on my singing. I was so flattered that I went home and made a small carving of Caruso in soap, a technique that I had learned in art class at Dickinson High School, Jersey City.

When I gave it to him Caruso was impressed. He offered to sponsor my studies if I elected to become a sculptor. The tenor died shortly afterwards, however, but his offer made me think seriously about sculpture as a profession. While still a student at Dickinson I enrolled at the Leonardo Da Vinci Art School in New York. Sculpture, I found, came easily to me...it is one of those things the good God does, as Caruso would say...I made things almost by instinct.

The first successful piece I made was a study of Quasimodo, the hunchback of Notre Dame. I was to show a photo of this to Gemito and he acted very impressed (But all that was to come later.)

When I was 18, I entered the studio of Onorio Ruotolo in New York. He directed me to more traditional subject matter while teaching me tech-



Acrosspage, left: "Lincoln the Railsplitter," bronze, 1925, Lincoln High School, Jersey City, N.J.; right: "Beethoven," marble, twice life size, won \$1,000 prize from radio station WEAF in New York City.

Right: Gemito poses for the young Giacomantonio.

The sculptures on these pages are by Archimedes Giacomantonio, author of this article.

nical skills. But more than that, because he felt that a sculptor had to be a well-rounded person, he began to shape my character. Practically everything I am today he made me. At 19, while I was still working with him, my sculpture "Lincoln, the Rail-splitter" won an award. This work brought me national newspaper publicity. I was called the "boy St. Gaudens." Can you imagine it? But to me it was just one of those things that seemed to happen naturally.

Later that same year I won a \$1,000 prize offered by Radio Station WEAF for a colossal bust of Beethoven. With these successes to goad me I decided to continue my studies at the Royal Academy of Art in Rome. With a promise of \$70 a month from my father plus the \$1,000 from WEAF I set out, planning to stay with my father's brother who was a newsman in Rome.

When my uncle met me on my arrival in the capital he said that he had to attend a news conference at the Hotel Minerva...Vincenzo Gemito was holding it. He had come to Rome to thank the government for the compensation awarded him for his incarceration in an asylum. I asked my uncle to take me with him, and my uncle did. Moreover, he introduced me to the great sculptor, telling Gemito that I had come all the way from America to meet him. The great man seemed very pleased and studied with interest the photos of my work that I showed him. When another newsman jokingly suggested to Gemito that I make a portrait of him, he agreed.

"If it is good," he said, "I will take you as my pupil."

As Gemito was to be in Rome for a few days I had the opportunity to work on the portrait in his room.



When I finished he lived up to his word and told me to report to him at his studio in Naples. Gemito approved of the head so I cast it in bronze. It is now in a museum in Rome, the Galleria di Arte Moderna.

Before I left the city I had received a scholarship at the Royal Academy but was given a leave of absence to study with Gemito. His villa was high on a hill overlooking the enchanting Bay of Naples. On the ground floor, originally a stable, he had installed a small bronze foundry to cast his works. He and his family lived on the second floor. I was to spend much time there.

Gemito was noted not only for his portraits but for his exquisite little figures and heads. These he turned out in his foundry in unlimited editions because he wanted to make sculpture easily available and inexpensive for all. It was one of the reasons he was so highly regarded.

I worked at Gemito's studio for a year and a half practicing all the steps in casting figures in bronze. I was also able to watch Gemito at work and learned much that way. While there I had an opportunity to go to the south of Italy to visit my grandmother whom I had not seen since I was a small boy. She had lived in Jersey City but as she got older she wanted to return to the old country, which she did.

She had a marvelous, lined face and I decided to make a portrait of

her for my father. I scooped out clay from her well and with it made a bust. When it was finished it was too heavy for me to carry back to Naples so I cut off the face and carried this small mask back with me to Gemito's studio. He advised me to leave it that way. I let the clay dry, then fired it. Before I sent this terra cotta home to Jersey City, I made a cast of it in bronze.

The bronze I entered in an exhibition in Rome where it was seen by the King of Italy who purchased it for his own collection. Back home, my father entered the terra cotta in the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design. It won the Maynard Prize. He knew nothing of the success the bronze was enjoying in Rome until he picked up a local paper to find a front-page photo story in the New York Times.

As I look back I hope that these achievements in some way compensated my father for the troubles I had caused him when I was a wild boy. I think possibly what pleased him most was learning that his natal village in Italy had made me an honorary citizen.

Altogether I spent six fruitful years in Italy. After such a fortunate beginning you would think not much could happen afterwards. However, Mussolini remembered me and probably thinking I would be a good agent to further friendly relations

*Continued on page 31*

# GEMITO

*Continued from page 15.*

between Italy and America, began to show me favor. He bought my portrait of a young girl, 'Mediterranean Flower,' for the Museum Campidoglio, Rome.

But the thing I liked best was when he asked me to restore some models of scientific instruments that had been made by Leonardo da Vinci. I was especially interested because one of my ancestors, Jacomontoni, was a pupil of the famous Florentine. Mussolini continued to give me a lot of work but finally stopped when native Italian sculptors began to protest favoritism.

During the time that I worked with Gemito, we became close friends. In

fact, I had become part of his family. Everything I know about bronze casting and finishing I learned from him. He was erratic, I admit; what genius isn't? You could never predict what he might do next. But he had a prodigious fund of knowledge about sculpture, all of which he was willing to share. He was a founding who had to fight for his very existence in the alleys of Naples. He made his way to the top but the price he paid was terrible.

The end to our relationship came in 1929 when I was in Rome. I received this telegram from his daughter "Come back to the studio to make papa's death mask. He would have wanted only you to do it." I still have that message and the mask willed to me with all his tools by Gemito.

I remained in Rome for four more years but everything after Gemito's death seemed anticlimactic. Finally I decided to return to Jersey City and sailed for home on the Conte Grande in 1932, right smack into the Great Depression. There was little chance for a sculptor to make a living then,

but luckily I met Janet Gaynor on the ship and made a portrait of her. Being with her sparked my interest in the theater and it proved a good thing. For while I could not make a living with sculpture, I could earn my keep in the theater and did so until only a few years ago.

I had left Jersey City a boy and returned a man of 26. My years of apprenticeship were over and I was launched. I was to make public monuments, portraits and figures of many famous people—but that is a story for another time.

Three years after my return I married a sweet New Jersey girl, Muriel Ruoff. We spent 27 happy years together in the studio at Sparta (NJ) which I bought a year after our marriage. She passed away in 1962. I am alone now but I can look back with satisfaction on my life and the people who became my friends. I feel now that all I had to do was make a wish...and it would happen. I was that lucky. I can only sum it up by saying—"God was good to me."

ARCHIMEDES GIACOMANTONIO  
(as told to Fritz Cleary)

Victory's Gate  
by J. Michael Wilson  
1984 Olympic Equestrian  
Competition Site  
Rancho Santa Fe, California  
Original: 10' H 12' W  
Maquette: 15" H 21" W

"Classic Bronze has not only captured the essence of my sculpture...the grace, electricity, and power...but they have the ability to produce each detail, from heroic to maquette sizes."  
J. Michael Wilson

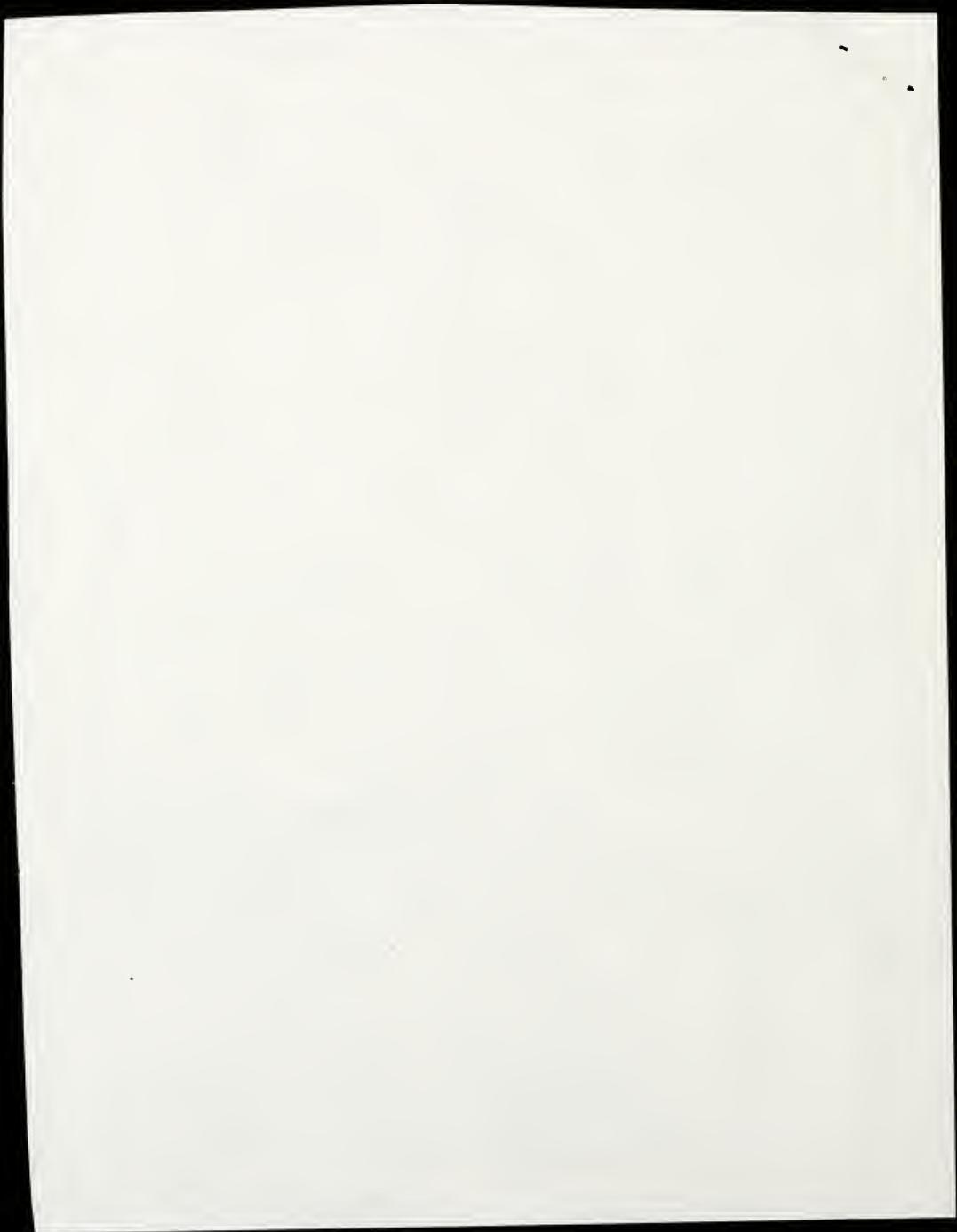
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